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**Jim Nelson**

John Anthony Dr.

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**Dr. Anthony: How did you get involved with the college to begin with?**

Probably if the truth were known I got sideswiped into it by David McCall. He talked to me and I said no I really wasn't interested. He said, well, we really need to get somebody from the business community on there and this and that, so I thought at the time Dicky was going to do it and I kept telling Dave, I kept back-peddling on him. I said I really don't have time, I really don't think it's what I want to do. He kept after me, and I was in his office one day, he said let's talk about this community college, running for this board, I said I'll tell you what I'll do. If Dicky doesn't run then I'll run. He said are you sure about that and I said yea. He said Dicky's not running. So that's how my name got thrown in the mix. But anyway, once I committed to it I got more interested and more involved. I really wasn't aware of the community college systems. I had never gone to one, I'd taught school for a while in Oklahoma, but never had been around the community colleges. So I was thinking of it more as just a place for the kids who couldn't make their grades and get into the universities, a spot for them to go, then the more I started looking at it and to see what a real community college system was like and then I got more involved and more interested and especially from the economic development force. I think that's what sold me on when we're interviewing your and when we're bring bringing in presidents, your involvement with the economic development side back and forth, so I could start to see the big picture that this portion of it could really be a boom to our area, to the whole country with everything would starting to come about 15 years ago. Telecommunications an all the type of business and how the training essentially the needs of these companies of people, and employment is such a big part of an area to bring in new companies and their corporations and that they have to have the training. That's when I kinda really got excited with that aspect of it. And then once we had the election and everybody came on board and everybody kinda started coming together with an original board and it really was kind of a family deal then.

**Dr. Anthony: You were in as part of a package slate or...How did that happen?**

Well, I can't even remember now.

**Dr. Anthony: I didn't even realize that until I saw some material from Carey the other day.**

I can't even remember, to be honest, how that all came about. I didn't really spend a whole lot of money as a matter of fact, I didn't spend any money. Somebody told me that somebody went out and bought name tags for \$5 ea. And I think that was my total expenditure of my campaign. I really didn't go out and campaign for it. I felt like, hey, if they needed somebody, if my name came I'd be more than happy to serve. I can't remember, I forgot about that or how that slate worked. Was it Plano?

**Dr. Anthony: No, you had Carey Cox then you had 6 of the 9 didn't get elected. You had Cargo, and Colin Chopin and a lady from Allen didn't make it then Tino and Joy and Bill Crawford were the 3 that did.**

I don't know if Hoagland and McCall if those guys put that together... I'd forgotten about that now that you mention it. I kinda think the original people put that slate together.

**Dr. Anthony: You were also active in trying to get a site and you want to tell me a little bit about that, you had several options to look at.**

Well, we did, our timing probably couldn't be worse, we were trying to find something we were just about getting to the top before everything fell overboard. We were trying to find Number 1, I guess we were trying to go in two directions. We wanted to get something in the center of the county to start with up in the McKinney area and then we also felt like the main, the large campus probably because of Plano population area that that would be the main campus area, the largest portion of it because of the population of

it. And I guess if I remember right we looked at the Bealls Mall. You and I were out there at that time looking at it – we couldn't make a deal with them and that's still setting there empty as we speak 15 years later and it would have made a perfect spot because it was right in the center of 121 and 75. But Osmond center was available. It was the only empty facility of that size in the McKinney area. So, it really fit in with what we were looking for – it had an existing facility with certain modifications could be finished out into a campus and so that's kinda how we jumped on it. Of course we had a mess with the ownership and it was in bankruptcy and the savings & loan that owned it was then closed down and investigated. People were going to prison. Sunrise and the guys that we dealt with both went to prison on the land and the building.

**Dr. Anthony: Then we had the realtor Miller, who wanted a commission on.**

Yes they got Miller and I was trying to think what that guys name was. I still talk to him every once in a while. He's not with Miller anymore, but he'll call. That was a facility that really worked and it was in the McKinney area and as it turned out I think it really worked out well. We probably jumped the gun, probably bought too much land, probably need all that except we wanted to have it and have a buffer and for growth and to keep something from coming in on us because the market did turn after that and we probably could have bought it for a lot less if we'd waited, but nobody knew at that time. That was just the unknown of what was ready to come down the road. But it did make a good campus and the Plano campus then was also a challenge in that we got it too with a family. It was Moore and his son-in-law. I can't even remember his name now. It was a heck of a mess, trying to get those people to work with them ...

**Dr. Anthony: The Metters portion went easy as I recall Mrs. Metters... and then we got tied up with the Morre thing.**

Yea, the Moore deal was actually what was... we had to go in and did we actually have to go in and condemn it and they wanted it condemned for tax purposes. So we had to go through all the legal stuff with that but it turned out here again that it was a good location

I think. It worked out, it worked out real well. So that was the big 2 early movements that all we had to deal with was getting the land and the campuses started. Of course then going through all the design of the Plano campus. Had some good architects and a good contractor – getting through the fire department some of the Plano crap we had to go through. Could say they created a college from the ground floor in our day and time. It's just not done. I don't know how many colleges, probably a dozen or so, have been since '85 across the country, so to me that was a unique experience of coming together as a group and going out and creating this college that none of us knew really anything about and so it was very important and I think we knew the importance when we hired you and bringing on the head man to take the same goal with it. I think our position was, he's the expert, he's been in this business for a long time and we want to bring in somebody that has created this college from day one and turn it over to him, and if he can't do it, we'll get rid of him and get somebody else but we're not going to get in the middle of him and I think we did that pretty well.

**Dr. Anthony: I think that's why it succeeded because you didn't**

But we didn't want to jump in and call the shots and we had good times on that with you that we'd like to have. And everybody kind of pulled and tugged a little bit and said hey let's step back a little bit and let the staff and Dr. Anthony and he's people do it. Again I think that's the reason it became very successful cause we weren't a board that got in the middle of everything and tried to do it our way cause we didn't know...

**Dr. Anthony: The only time I got a little scared was when Collin wanted to count and approve all the library equipment.**

Well, like I said... but I think that's what really made that successful and we were lucky that you were there and came along and there's some other good people too. They narrowed it down to, you know, 4 or 5 good solid candidates and but I think with you coming on and the board letting you do your deal and the staff that you brought in really made this as I assume as successful as any community college in the country. So I



enjoyed it. I was going through some rough times in my life towards the end of the 5 years I was on there, but it was really rewarding to me to see the college come about and the success it was having. A number of kids, I don't think any of us realized that the number of students that would take advantage of those facilities. And I don't know...what's the number today?

**Dr. Anthony: Probably with credit and non-credit – 24-25,000.**

Largest number of students in the whole state. It was fun and it was very rewarding and I think it was something we all could look back on and take pride in. I know the rest of the board does. It's been real gratifying to see the college move in the direction.

**Dr. Anthony: Any disappointment in it?**

No, I don't think so, nothing that stood out. The only thing I got... there was a little friction during that Frisco campus – that was part of it. It wasn't a big deal, we needed probably to go to Frisco, I felt at that time that RTD or FDIC land in Plano was a pure buy, and it was probably a better buy than we were able to do in Frisco. But I think on the other hand it needed to be not another campus in Plano.

**Dr. Anthony: And we had that Haggard tract and then the FDIC. I guess that corner of Hedgecox and Ohio. It's still not been developed has it?**

No, they're getting ready to develop some talks with the Columbian Drug Smugglers, these guys came in there and thought about the land and the guy from the FDIC told me that one of them got assassinated back in Columbia. It went from the community college buying it to the Columbian Drug Smugglers. But they've owned it – somebody down there does and it's never changed hands but they have some developers doing some residential lot development. No, and the Frisco company has turned out great I think. Nobody knew Frisco was going to grow as fast as it did. Nothing compared to what's happened up there. I'm still amazed at what's happened driving north on 121 and see...

**Dr. Anthony: Just driving up Preston now and seeing all that commercial and the result of that mall.**

It's got to be the slowest road project of all time. I just cannot imagine...why I don't even know who's got that contract. But evidently they're not on...

**Dr. Anthony: It's hurting the enrollment there too. People can't get in and out, it's not safe. Most of the students now come up Hillcrest.**

Well, we

Re doing stuff in Prosper and north of 380 and it hurts that whole area up there cause the people who live up there just can't get by, get through the doors.

**TAPE ENDED**